

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

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R 161449Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4031

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, WAIR, SF

SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL PROGRAM: VISIT OF AVIONICS GROUP: A POSTMORTEM

1. IN VIEW OF CONGEN JOHANNESBURG AND EMBASSY PRETORIA VISIT OF THE PRIVATE AVIONICS GROUP TO SOUTH AFRICA WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT IT MAY PROVE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE FOR FUTURE SALES OF AVIONICS EQUIPMENT AND POSSIBLY FOR OTHER GROUPS PLANNING TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION IN TRADE MISSIONS VISITING ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA.

2. OUR GREATEST CONCERN ABOUT THE AVIONICS VISIT WAS THE VIRTUAL LACK OF INTEREST EXPRESSED BY ANY OF THE GROUP IN CONTACTING COMPANIES HERE WHICH HAD SPECIFICALLY INFORMED US THAT THEY WANTED TO MEET THE US REPRESENTATIVES. WE HAD CIRCULARIZED INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES AND BANKS HERE ABOUT THIS VISIT AND MADE A LISTING FOR EACH AVIONICS REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE COMPANIES WHICH WERE INTERESTED IN SEEING HIM. WE WORKED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES HOPED FOR AS MANY APPOINTMENTS AS POSSIBLE, A VIEW CONFIRMED BY ADDIS ABABA'S TELEGRAM 1423 RECEIVED SHORTLY BEFORE THE GROUP'S ARRIVAL. EACH LIST CONTAINED TEN TO TWELVE NAMES, MOSTLY LARGE, WELL-KNOWN SOUTH AFRICAN FIRMS OFFERING

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COUNTRY-WIDE COVERAGE IN A RANGE OF CIVILIAN, COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES,

E.G. PLACO, COMAIR, ETC., THESE LISTS WERE HAND-CARRIED TO PRETORIA BY THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE WHO CALLED AT THE CONGEN AND WE ASSUME ALL WERE THUS INFORMED OF THEIR PROSPECTIVE APPOINTMENTS. APPARENTLY NONE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES CONTACTED THE LOCAL FIRMS. WE HAVE RECEIVED ABOUT FORTY TELEPHONE CALLS FROM VARIOUS FIRMS HERE TO ASCERTAIN THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE AVIONICS GROUP, WHETHER THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MARKET, ETC. THUS, IN OUR OPIONION, THE POTENTIAL EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR AVIONICS EQUIPMENT WERE DAMAGED BY THIS GROUP'S OBVIOUS LACK OF INTEREST, AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE INDUSTRY GROUPS COMING TO SOUTH AFRICA MAY HAVE BEEN JEOPARDIZED.

3. FURTHER SERIOUS PROBLEM WAS THAT THE AVIONICS REPRESENTATIVES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN UNAWARE OF THE ARMS EMBARGO POLICY. ONE REPRESENTATIVE, AT LEAST, RATHER THAN GOING WITH THE MISSION TO BOTSWANA, PLEADED ILLNESS IN PRETORIA TO CALL ON SAG MILITARY IN COMPANY WITH HIS LOCAL AGENT. HE WAS MIFFED WHEN THE EMBASSY TOLD HIM ABOUT THE EMBARGO. HE ALSO DISMISSED HIS LIST OF APPOINTMENT MADE BY CONGEN AS A "BUNCH OF HI-FI DEALERS" BUT WITHOUT SEEING THEM.

4. ADDED POINT OF INTEREST IS THAT CONGEN JOHANNESBURG HAD COUNTED ON DEBRIEFING AVIONICS GROUP MEMBERS, EVEN ACCOMPANYING SOME ON CALLS IF APPROPRIATE, TO INTEGRATE FINDINGS AND MARKET INTELLIGENCE INTO LONG OVERDUE AVIONICS MARKET RESEARCH REPORT WHICH IS NOW BEING COMPLETED.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. WE SUGGEST THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE IN FUTURE TO SEE THAT BUSINESSMEN COMING ON TRADE MISSIONS BUT VISITING SOUTH AFRICA AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS UNDERSTAND THE CONSULATE GENERAL AND EMBASSY WANT TO PROVIDEEVERY ASSISTANCE AND WILL GLADLY DO SO ON RECEIPT OF SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES. THIS WOULD INCLUDE BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS WHEN THE REPRESENTATIVES REQUEST THEM.

B. TO IMPROVE COORDINATION OF GROUP VISITS AND AVOID MISTAKES OF AVIONICS VISIT, GROUPS SHOULD BE ADVISED TO SELECT IN ADVANCE A SPOKESMAN OR COORDINATOR FROM PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN MEMBERS OR TRADE/INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION TO HELP THEM MEET SCHEDULES AND KEEP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPOINTMENTS.
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